

CHICAGO—Today, U.S. Representatives Mike Quigley (D-IL) and Bart Stupak (D-MI) released a copy of a letter they sent to President Barack Obama, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper, and the Commissioners of the Joint Commission urging Canada to reexamine its oil drilling policies in the Great Lakes. The two Congressmen were joined by 20 other representatives in recommending that Canada institute a ban on oil and gas drilling in the Great Lakes, as the United States has done.

“Over the past few months—in the Gulf Coast and closer to home—we have seen the debilitating effects of our dependence on oil with each community ruined and ecosystem destroyed,” said Quigley. “If we are to leave our planet inhabitable for future generations then we must rethink our energy policies both in our own backyard and around the world.”

“As we witnessed in the Gulf of Mexico, oil spills know no boundaries. So long as we continue to have different laws on drilling in our shared Great Lakes waters, we are all at risk. With 45 million people in the United States and Canada relying on the Great Lakes for drinking water, fishing, recreation, agriculture, industry and shipping this is a risk we simply can’t afford,” added Stupak.

The Energy Policy Act prohibited oil and gas drilling in the American Waters of the Great Lakes in 2005, however, the ban does not extend to Canadian waters. In April, an explosion on the Deepwater Horizon oil rig resulted in the largest oil spill in U.S. history, decimating the Gulf Coast environmentally and economically. Just two weeks ago, a crack in a Michigan pipeline led to more than 1 million gallons of oil spilling into a tributary of the Kalamazoo River, which flows into Lake Michigan.

A PDF of the complete letter is available [here](#) and the full text can be found below. Senator Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) has sent a similar letter to President Obama encouraging a ban of oil and gas operations in the Great Lakes.

In his first term in Congress, Quigley has placed environmental protection and stewardship at the top of his legislative agenda. Last week, he [passed an amendment](#) to Carbon Limits and Energy for American Renewal (CLEAR) Act mandating oil companies to royalties on spill oil.

He also introduced the

[Protect Our Oceans Act](#)

, which demands stronger consideration of environmental impact and protection while drilling for oil and gas in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS).

Stupak has made protecting the Great Lakes a top priority during his 18-year career in Congress. In addition to working to create the federal ban on drilling in and under the Great Lakes, Stupak has written and supported legislation to reverse damage caused by invasive species, including Asian carp, prevent partially treated human waste from being dumped into the Great Lakes and stop the proposed diversion of Great Lakes water to China. Last week, Stupak included language in the CLEAR Act to reaffirm the federal ban on oil and gas drilling in the Great Lakes by ensuring that future energy resource plans developed for the Great Lakes do not include non-renewable energy resources.

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Dear President Obama, Prime Minister Harper and the Commissioners of the International Joint Commission:

The Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico is a devastating disaster that further illuminated the need to ensure we have the proper protections in place to prohibit a similar event from ever happening again. Further, we must remember not only to protect our oceans, but the Great Lakes as well, and ensure that these waters remain the pristine ecosystem and viable tourism and economic boon they are today.

In 2001, Congress adopted a ban on new oil and gas drilling of any kind in the U.S. waters of the Great Lakes, a ban that was extended twice through 2007. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 (P.L. 109-58) made this ban permanent. Importantly, however, the ban does not extend to Canadian waters and, in fact, Canada does conduct oil and gas extraction in Lake Erie.

The United States and Canada have a long history of working together to protect the Great Lakes. The 1909 Boundary Waters Treaty recognized this important relationship and acknowledged that each country is affected by the other's actions in the Great Lakes and other bodies of waters along our shared border.

In light of Canada's long history of environmental stewardship, we urge the U.S. and Canadian governments in coordination with the International Joint Commission, to undertake a review of oil and gas drilling by Canada in the Great Lakes, particularly in regard to safety, environmental impact and oil spill response plans. Ultimately we believe it is most appropriate for Canada to pursue a ban on drilling in the Great Lakes similar to the U.S. law.

From the Gulf of Mexico to the Great Lakes, we have a moral obligation to leave our planet inhabitable for future generations, and it begins with taking the necessary precautions against potentially catastrophic and irrevocable harm to our natural resources and precious ecosystems.

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